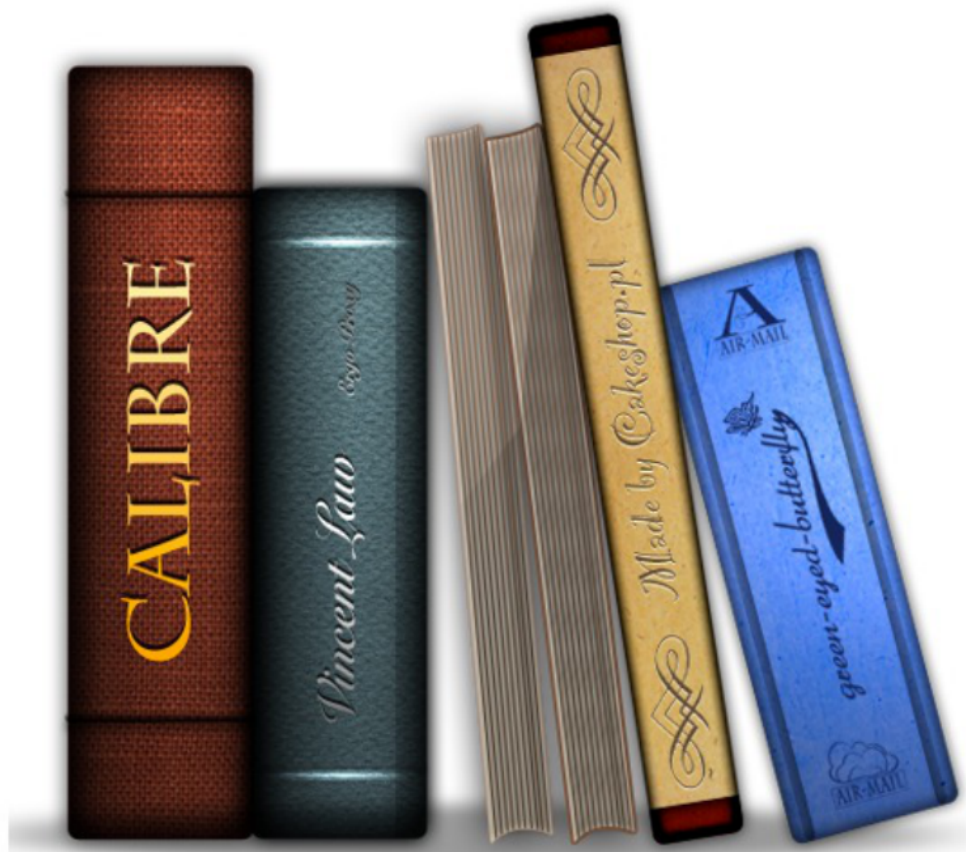


# When You Care, When You Love.htm

Theodore Sturgeon



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# WHEN YOU CARE, WHEN YOU LOVE

Theodore Sturgeon

He was beautiful in her bed.

When you care, when you love, when you treasure someone, you can watch the beloved in sleep as you watch everything, anything else—laughter, lips to a cup, a look even away from you; a stride, sun a-struggle lost in a hair-lock, a jest or a gesture—even stillness, even sleep.

She leaned close, all but breathless and watched his lashes. Now, lashes are thick sometimes, curled, russet; these were all these, and glossy besides. Look closely—there where they curve lives light in tiny serrated scimitars. All so good, so very good, she let herself deliciously doubt its reality. She would let herself believe, in a moment, that this was real, was true, was here, had at last happened. All the things her life before had ever given her, all she had ever wanted, each by each had come to her purely for wanting. Delight there might be, pride, pleasure, even glory in the new possession of gift, privilege, object, experience: her ring, hat, toy, trip to Trinidad; yet, with possession there had always been (until now) the platter called *well, of course* on which these things were served her. For had she not wanted it? But this, now—*him*, now... greatest of all her wants, ever; first thing in all her life to transcend want itself and knowingly become need: this she had at last, at long (how long, now) long last, this she had now for good and all, for always, forever and never a touch of *well, of course*. He was her personal miracle, he in this bed now, warm and loving her. He was the reason and the reward of it all—her family and forbears, known by so few and felt by so many, and indeed, the whole history of mankind leading up to it, and all she herself had been and done and felt; and loving him, and losing him, and seeing him dead and bringing him back—it was all for this moment and because the moment had to be, he and this peak, this warmth in these sheets, this *now* of hers. He was all life and all life's beauty, beautiful in her bed; and now she could be sure, could believe it, believe...

"I do," she breathed. "I do."

"What do you do?" he asked her. He had not moved, and did not now.

"Devil, I thought you were asleep."

"Well, I was. But I had the feeling someone was looking."

"Not looking," she said softly. "Watching." She was watching the lashes

still, and did not see them stir, but between them now lay a shining sliver of the gray, cool aluminum of his surprising eyes. In a moment he would look at her—just that—in a moment their eyes would meet and it would be as if nothing new had happened (for it would be the same metal missile which had first impaled her) and also as if everything, everything were happening again. Within her, passion boiled up like a fusion fireball, so beautiful, so huge—

—and like the most dreaded thing on earth, without pause the radiance changed, shifting from the hues of all the kinds of love to all the tones of terror and the colors of a cataclysm.

She cried his name...

And the gray eyes opened wide in fear for her fears and in astonishment, and he bounded up laughing, and the curl of his laughing lips turned without pause to the pale writhing of agony, and they shrank apart, too far apart while the white teeth met and while between them he shouted his hurt. He fell on his side and doubled up, grunting, gasping in pain... grunting, gasping, wrapped away from her, unreachable even by her. She screamed. She screamed. She—

A Wyke biography is hard to come by. This has been true for four generations, and more true with each, for the more the Wyke holdings grew, the less visible have been the Wyke family, for so Cap'n Gamaliel Wyke willed it after his conscience conquered him. This (for he was a prudent man) did not happen until after his retirement from what was euphemistically called the molasses, to Europe, having brought molasses from the West Indies to New England. Of course a paying cargo was needed for the westward crossing, to close with a third leg this profitable triangle, and what better cargo than Africans for the West Indies, to harvest the cane and work in the mills which made the molasses?

Ultimately affluent and retired, he seemed content for a time to live among his peers, carrying his broadcloth coat and snowy linen as to the manor born, limiting his personal adornment to a massive golden ring and small square gold buckles at his knee. Soberly shop-talking molasses often, rum seldom, slaves never, he dwelt with a frightened wife and a silent son, until she died and something—perhaps loneliness—coupled his brain again to his sharp old eyes, and made him look about him. He began to dislike the hypocrisy of man and was honest enough to dislike himself as well, and this was a new thing for the Cap'n; he could not deny it and he could not contain it, so he left the boy with the household staff and, taking only a manservant, went into the wilderness to search his soul.

The wilderness was Martha's Vineyard, and right through a bitter winter the old man crouched by the fire when the weather closed in, and, muffled in four great gray shawls, paced the beaches when it was bright, his brass telescope under his arm and his grim canny thoughts doing mighty battle with

his convictions. In the late spring, he returned to Wiscasset, his blunt certainty regained, his laconic curtness increased almost to the point of speechlessness. He sold out (as a startled contemporary described it) “everything that showed,” and took his son, an awed, obedient eleven, back to the Vineyard where, to the accompaniment of tolling breakers and creaking gulls, he gave the boy an education to which all the schooling of all the Wykes for all of four generations would be mere addenda.

For in his retreat to the storms and loneliness of the inner self and the Vineyard, Gamaliel Wyke had come to terms with nothing less than the Decalogue.

He had never questioned the Ten Commandments, nor had he knowingly disobeyed them. Like many another before him, he attributed the sad state of the world and the sin of its inhabitants to their refusal to heed those Rules. But in his ponderings, God Himself, he at last devoutly concluded, had underestimated the stupidity of mankind. So he undertook to amend the Decalogue himself, by adding “... or cause...” to each Commandment, just to make it easier for a man to work with:

“... or cause the Name of the Lord to be taken in vain.”

“... or cause stealing to be done.”

“... or cause dishonor to thy father and thy mother.”

“... or cause the commission of adultery.”

“... or cause a killing to be done.”

But his revelation came to him when he came to the last one. It was suddenly clear to him that all mankind’s folly—all greed, lust, war, all dishonor, sprang from humanity’s almost total disregard for this edict and its amendment: “Thou shalt not covet... *nor cause covetousness!*”

It came to him then that to arouse covetousness in another is just as deadly a sin as to kill him or to cause his murder. Yet all around the world empires rose, great yachts and castles and hanging gardens came into being, tombs and trusts and college grants, all for the purpose of arousing the envy or covetousness of the less endowed—or having that effect no matter what the motive.

Now, one way for a man as rich as Gamaliel Wyke to have resolved the matter for himself would be St. Francis’ way; but (though he could not admit this, or even recognize it) he would have discarded the Decalogue and his amendments, all surrounding Scripture and his gnarled right arm rather than run so counter to his inborn, ingrained Yankee acquisitiveness. And another way might have been to take his riches and bury them in the sand of Martha’s Vineyard, to keep them from causing covetousness; the very thought clogged his nostrils with the feel of dune-sand and he felt suffocation; to him money was a living thing and should not be interred.

And so he came to his ultimate answer: Make your money, enjoy it, but

*never let anyone know.* Desire, he concluded, for a neighbor's wife, or a neighbor's ass, or for anything, presupposed knowing about these possessions. No neighbor could desire anything of his if he couldn't lay a name to it.

So Gamaliel brought weight like granite and force like gravity to bear upon the mind and soul of his son Walter, and Walter begat Jedediah, and Jedediah begat Caiaphas (who died) and Samuel, and Samuel began Zebulon (who died) and Sylva; so perhaps the true beginning of the story of the boy who became his own mother lies with Cap'n Gamaliel Wyke and his sand-scoured, sea-deep, rock-hard revelation.

—fell on his side on the bed and doubled up, grunting, gasping, wrapped away from her, even her, unreachable even by her.

She screamed. She screamed. She pressed herself up and away from him and ran naked into the sitting room, pawed up the ivory telephone: "Keogh" she cried; "For the love of God, *Keogh!*"

—and back into the bedroom where he lay open-mouthing a grating horrible *uh uh!* while she wrung her hands, tried to take one of his, found it agony-tense and unaware of her. She called him, called him, and once, screamed again.

The buzzer sounded with inexcusable discretion.

"Keogh!" she shouted, and the polite buzzer *shhh'd* her again—the lock, oh the damned lock... she picked up her negligee and ran with it in her hand through the dressing room and the sitting room and the hall and the living room and the foyer and flung open the door. She pulled Keogh through it before he could turn away from her; she thrust one arm in a sleeve of the garment and shouted at him, "Keogh, please, please, Keogh, what's wrong with him?" and she fled to the bedroom, Keogh sprinting to keep up with her.

Then Keogh, chairman of the board of seven great corporations, board-member of a dozen more, general manager of a quiet family holding company which had, for most of a century, specialized in the ownership of corporate owners, went to the bed and fixed his cool blue gaze on the agonized figure there. He shook his head slightly.

"You called the wrong man," he snapped, and ran back to the sitting-room, knocking the girl aside as if he had been a machine on tracks. He picked up the phone and said, "Get Rathburn up here. *Now.* Where's Weber? You don't? Well, find him and get him here... I don't care. Hire an airplane. *Buy* an airplane."

He slammed down the phone and ran back into the bedroom. He came up behind her and gently lifted the negligee onto her other shoulder, and speaking gently to her all the while, reached round her and tied the ribbon belt. "What happened?"

"N-nothing, he just—"

"Come on, girl—clear out of here. Rathburn's practically outside the door,

and I've sent for Weber. If there's a better doctor than Rathburn, it could only be Weber, so you've got to leave it to them. Come!"

"I won't leave him."

"Come!" Keogh rapped; then murmured, looking over her shoulder at the bed, "He wants you to, can't you see? He doesn't want you to see him like this. *Right?*" he demanded, and the face, turned away and half-buried in the pillow shone sweatily; cramp mounded the muscles on the side of the mouth they could just see. Stiffly the head nodded; it was like a shudder. "And... shut... door... tight..." he said in a clanging half whisper.

"Come," said Keogh. And again, "Come." He propelled her away; she stumbled. Her face turned yearningly until Keogh, both hands on her, kicked at the door and it swung and the sight of the bed was gone. Keogh leaned back against the door as if the latch were not enough to hold it closed.

"What is it? Oh, what is it?"

"I don't know," he said.

"You do, you do... you always know everything... why won't you let me stay with him?"

"He doesn't want that."

Overcome, inarticulate, she cried out.

"Maybe," he said into her hair, "he wants to scream too."

She struggled—oh, strong, lithe and strong she was. She tried to press past him. He would not budge, so at last, at last she wept.

He held her in his arms again, as he had not done since she used to sit on his lap as a little girl. He held her in his arms and looked blindly toward the unconcerned bright morning, seen soft-focused through the cloud of her hair. And he tried to make it stop, the morning, the sun, and time, but—

—but there is one certain thing only about a human mind, and that is that it acts, moves, works ceaselessly while it lives. The action, motion, labor differ from that of a heart, say, or an epithelial cell, in that the latter have functions, and in any circumstance perform their functions. Instead of a function, mind has a duty, that of making of a hairless ape a human being... yet as if to prove how trivial a difference there is between mind and muscle, mind must move, to some degree, always change, to some degree, always while it lives, like a stinking sweat gland... holding her, Keogh thought about Keogh.

The biography of Keogh is somewhat harder to come by than that of a Wyke. This is not in spite of having spent merely half a lifetime in this moneyed shadow; it is because of it. Keogh was a Wyke in all but blood and breeding: Wyke owned him and all he owned, which was a great deal.

He must have been a child once, a youth; he could remember if he wished but did not care to. Life began for him with the *summa cum laude*, the degrees in both business and law and (so young) the year and a half with Hinnegan

and Bache, and then the incredible opening at the International Bank; the impossible asked of him in the Zurich-Plenum affair, and his performance of it, and the shadows which grew between him and his associates over the years, while for him the light grew and grew as to the architecture of his work, until at last he was admitted to Wyke, and was permitted to realize that Wyke *was* Zurich and Plenum, and the International Bank, and Hinnegan and Bache; was indeed his law school and his college and much, so very much more. And finally sixteen—good heavens, it was eighteen years ago, when he became General Manager, and the shadows dark to totally black between him and any other world, while the light, his own huge personal illumination, exposed almost to him alone an industrial-financial complex unprecedented in his country, and virtually unmatched in the world.

But then, the beginning, the *other* beginning, was when Old Sam Wyke called him in so abruptly that morning, when (though General Manager with many a board chairman, all unbeknownst, under him in rank) he was still the youngest man in that secluded office.

“Keogh,” said old Sam, “this is my kid. Take ‘er out. Give ‘er anything she wants. Be back here at six.” He had then kissed the girl on the crown of her dark straw hat, gone to the door, turned and barked, “You see her show off or brag, Keogh, you fetch her a good one, then and there, hear? I don’t care what else she does, but don’t you let her wave something she’s got at someone that hasn’t got it. That’s Rule One.” He had then breezed out, leaving a silent, startled young mover of mountains locking gazes with an unmoving mouse of an eleven-year-old girl. She had luminous pale skin, blue-black silky-shining hair, and thick, level, black brows.

The *summa cum laude*, the acceptance at Hinnegan and Bache—all such things, they were beginnings that he knew were beginnings. This he would not know for some time that it was a beginning, any more than he could realize that he had just heard the contemporary version of Cap’n Gamaliel’s “Thou shalt not... cause covetousness.” At the moment, he could only stand nonplussed for a moment, then, excuse himself and go to the treasurer’s office, where he scribbled a receipt and relieved the petty cash box of its by no means petty contents. He got his hat and coat and returned to the President’s office. Without a word the child rose and moved with him to the door. They lunched and spent the afternoon together, and were back at six. He bought her whatever she wanted at one of the most expensive shops in New York. He took her to just the places of amusement she asked him to.

When it was all over, he returned the stack of bills to the petty cash box, less the one dollar and twenty cents he had paid out. For at the shop—the largest toy store in the world—she had carefully selected a sponge rubber ball, which they packed for her in a cubical box. This she carried carefully by its string for the rest of the afternoon.

They lunched from a pushcart—he had one hot dog with kraut, she had two



with relish.

They rode uptown on the top of a Fifth Avenue double-decker, open-top bus.

They went to the zoo in Central Park and bought one bag of peanuts for the girl and the pigeons, and one bag of buns for the girl and the bears.

Then they took another double-decker back downtown, and that was it; that was the afternoon.

He remembered clearly what she looked like then: like a straw-hatted wren, for all it was a well-brushed wren. He could not remember what they had talked about, if indeed they had talked much at all. He was prepared to forget the episode, or at least to put it neatly in the *Trivia: Misc.: Closed* file in his compartmented mind, when, a week later, old Sam tossed him a stack of papers and told him to read them through and come and ask questions if he thought he had to. The only question which came to mind when he had read them was, "Are you sure you want to go through with this?" and that was not the kind of question one asked old Sam. So he thought it over very carefully and came up with "Why me?" and old Sam looked him up and down and growled, "She likes you, that's why."

And so it was that Keogh and the girl lived together in a cotton mill town in the South for a year. Keogh worked in the company store. The girl worked in the mill; twelve-year-old girls worked in cotton mills in the South in those days. She worked the morning shift and half the evening shift, and had three hours' school in the afternoons. Up until ten o'clock on Saturday nights they watched the dancing from the sidelines. On Sundays they went to the Baptist church. Their name while they were there was Harris. Keogh used to worry frantically when she was out of his sight, but one day when she was crossing the catwalk over the water-circulating sump, a sort of oversized well beside the mill, the catwalk broke and pitched her into the water. Before she could so much as draw a breath a Negro stoker appeared out of nowhere—actually, out of the top of the coal chute—and leapt in and had her and handed her up to the sudden crowd. Keogh came galloping up from the company store as they were pulling the stoker out, and after seeing that girl was all right, knelt beside the man, whose leg was broken.

"I'm Mr. Harris, her father. You'll get a reward for this. What's your name?"

The man beckoned him close, and as he bent down, the stoker, in spite of his pain, grinned and winked. "You don' owe me a thang, Mr. Keogh," he murmured. In later times, Keogh would be filled with rage at such a confidence, would fire the man out of hand: this first time he was filled with wonder and relief. After that, things were easier on him, as he realized that the child was surrounded by Wyke's special employees, working on Wyke land in a Wyke mill and paying rent in a Wyke row-house.

In due time the year was up. Someone else took over, and the girl, now

named Kevin and with a complete new background in case anyone should ask, went off for two years to a very exclusive Swiss finishing school, where she dutifully wrote letters to a Mr. and Mrs. Kevin who held large acreage in the Pennsylvania mountains, and who just as dutifully answered her.

Keogh returned to his own work, which he found in apple-pie order, with every one of the year's transactions beautifully abstracted for him, and an extra amount, over and above his astronomical salary, tucked away in one of his accounts—an amount that startled even Keogh. He missed her at first, which he expected. But he missed her every single day for two solid years, a disturbance he could not explain, did not examine, and discussed with no one.

All the Wykes, old Sam once grunted to him, did something of the sort. He, Sam, had been a logger in Oregon and a year and a half as utility man, then ordinary seaman on a coastwise tanker.

Perhaps some deep buried part of Keogh's mind thought that when she returned from Switzerland, they would go for catfish in an old flat-bottomed boat again, or that she would sit on his lap while he suffered on the hard benches of the once-a-month picture show. The instant he saw her on her return from Switzerland, he knew that would never be. He knew he was entering some new phase; it troubled and distressed him and he put it away in the dark inside himself; he could do that; he was strong enough. And she—well, she flung her arms around him and kissed him; but when she talked with this new vocabulary, this deft school finish, she was strange and awesome to him, like an angel. Even a loving angel is strange and awesome...

They were together again then for a long while, but there were no more hugs. He became a Mr. Stark in the Cleveland office of a brokerage house and she boarded with an elderly couple, went to the local high school and had a part-time job filing in his office. This was when she learned the ins and outs of the business, the size of it. It would be hers. It became hers while they were in Cleveland: old Sam died very suddenly. They slipped away to the funeral but were back at work on Monday. They stayed there for another eight months; she had a great deal to learn. In the fall she entered a small private college and Keogh saw nothing of her for a year.

"Shhh," he breathed to her, crying, and *sssh!* said the buzzer.

"The doctor..."

"Go take a bath," he said. He pushed her.

She half-turned under his hand, faced him again blazing. "No!"

"You can't go in there, you know," he said, going for the door. She glared at him, but her lower lip trembled.

Keogh opened the door. "In the bedroom."

"Who—" then the doctor saw the girl, her hands knotted together, her face twisted, and had his answer. He was a tall man, gray, with quick hands, a quick step, swift words. He went straight through foyer, hall and rooms and

into the bedroom. He closed the door behind him. There had been no discussion, no request and refusal; Dr. Rathburn had simply, quickly, quietly shut them out.

“Go take a bath.”

“No.”

“Come on.” He took her wrist and led her to the bathroom. He reached into the shower stall and turned on the side jets. There were four at each corner; the second from the top was scented. Apple blossom. “Go on.”

He moved toward the door. She stood where he had let go of her wrist, pulling at her hands. “Go on,” he said again. “Just a quick one. Do you good.” He waited. “Or do you want me to douse you myself? I bet I still can.”

She flashed him a look; indignation passed instantly as she understood what he was trying to do. The rare spark of mischief appeared in her eyes and, in perfect imitation of a mill-row redneck, she said, “Y’all try it an Ah’ll tall th’ shurff Ah ain’t rightly yo’ chile.” But the effort cost her too much, and she cried again. He stepped out and softly closed the door.

He was waiting by the bedroom when Rathburn slid out and quickly shut the door on the grunt, the gasp.

“What is it?” asked Keogh.

“Wait a minute.” Rathburn strode to the phone; Keogh said, “I sent for Weber.”

Rathburn came almost ludicrously to a halt. “Wow,” he said. “Not bad diagnosing, for a layman. Is there anything you can’t do?”

“I can’t understand what you’re talking about,” said Keogh testily.

“Oh—I thought you knew. Yes, I’m afraid it’s in Weber’s field. What made you guess?” Keogh shuddered. “I saw a mill hand take a low blow once. I know *he* wasn’t hit. What exactly is it?”

Rathburn darted a look around. “Where is she?”

Keogh indicated the bathroom. “I told her to take a shower.”

“Good,” said the doctor. He lowered his voice. “Naturally I can’t tell without further examination and lab—”

“*What is it?*” Keogh demanded, not loud, but with such violence that Rathburn stepped back a pace.

“It could be choriocarcinoma.”

Tiredly, Keogh wagged his head. “Me diagnose that? I can’t even spell it. What is it?” He caught himself up, as if he had retrieved the word from thin air and run it past him again, “I know what the last part of it means.”

“One of the—” Rathburn swallowed, and tried again. “One of the more vicious forms of cancer. And it. . .” He lowered his voice again. “It doesn’t always hit this hard.”

“Just how serious is it?”

Rathburn raised his hands and let them fall.

“Bad, eh? Doc—*how bad?*”

“Maybe some day we can...” Rathburn’s lowered voice at last disappeared. They hung there, each on the other’s pained gaze.

“How much time?”

“Maybe six weeks.”

“*Six weeks!*”

“Shh,” said Rathburn nervously.

“Weber—”

“Weber knows more about internal physiology than anybody. But I don’t know if that will help. It’s a little like...your, uh, house is struck by lightning, flattened, burned to the ground. You can examine it and the weather reports and, uh, know exactly what happened. Maybe some day we can...” he said again, but he said it so hopelessly that Keogh, through the rolling mists of his own terror, pitied him and half-instinctively put out a hand. He touched the doctor’s sleeve and stood awkwardly.

“What are you going to do?”

Rathburn looked at the closed bedroom door. “What I did.” He made a gesture with a thumb and two fingers. “Morphine.”

“And that’s all?”

“Look, I’m a G.P. Ask Weber, will you?”

Keogh realized that he had pushed the man as far as he could in his search for a crumb of hope; if there was none, there was no point in trying to squeeze it out. He asked, “Is there anyone working on it? Anything new? Can you find out?”

“Oh, I will, I will. But Weber can tell you off the top of his head more than I could find out in six mon... in a long time.”

A door opened. She came out, hollow-eyed, but pink and glowing in a long white terry-cloth robe. “Dr. Rathburn—”

“He’s asleep.”

“Thank God. Does it—”

“There’s no pain.”

“What is it? What happened to him?”

“Well, I wouldn’t like to say for sure... we’re wating for Dr. Weber. He’ll know.”

“But—but is he—”

“He’ll sleep the clock around.”

“Can I...” The timidity, the caution, Keogh realized, was so unlike her.

“Can I see him?”

“He’s fast asleep!”

“I don’t care. I’ll be quiet. I won’t touch him or anything.”

“Go ahead,” said Rathburn. She opened the bedroom door and eagerly, silently slipped inside.

“You’d think she was trying to make sure he was there.”

Keogh, who knew her so very well, said, “She is.”

But a biography of Guy Gibbon is *really* hard to come by. For he was no exceptional executive, who for all his guarded anonymity wielded so much power that he must be traceable by those who knew where to look and what to look for, and cared enough to process detail like a mass spectroscopy. Neither was Guy Gibbon born heir to countless millions, the direct successor to a procession of giants.

He came from wherever it is most of us come from, the middle or the upper-middle, or the upper-lower middle or the lower-upper middle, or some other indefinable speck in the mid-range of the interflowing striations of society (the more they are studied, the less they mean). He belonged to the Wykes entity for only eight and a half weeks, after all. Oh, the bare details might not be too hard to come by—(birth date, school record) and certain main facts—(father’s occupation, mother’s maiden name)—as well, perhaps as a highlight or two—(divorce, perhaps, or a death in the family); but a biography, a real biography, which does more than describe, which *explains* the man—and few do—now, *this* is an undertaking.

Science, it is fair to assume, can do what all the king’s horses and all the king’s men could not do, and totally restore a smashed egg. Given equipment enough, and time enough... but isn’t this a way of saying, “given money enough?” For money can be not only means, but motive. So if enough money went into the project, perhaps the last unknown, the last vestige of anonymity could be removed from a man’s life story, even a young man from (as the snobs say) nowhere, no matter how briefly—though intimately—known.

The most important thing, obviously, that ever happened to Guy Gibbon in his life was his first encounter with the Wyke entity, and like many a person before and since, he had not the faintest idea he had done so. It was when he was in his late teens, and he and Sammy Stein went trespassing.

Sammy was a school sidekick, and this particular day he had a secret; he had been very insistent on the day’s outing, but refused to say why. He was a burly-shouldered, good-natured, reasonably chinless boy whose close friendship with Guy was based almost exclusively on the attraction of opposite poles. And since, of the many kinds of fun they had had, the most fun was going trespassing, he wanted it that way on this particular occasion.

“Going trespassing,” as an amusement, had more or less invented itself when they were in their early teens. They lived in a large city surrounded (unlike many today) by old suburbs, not new ones. These included large—some, more than large—estates and mansions, and it was their greatest delight to slip through a fence or over a wall and, profoundly impressed by their own bravery, slip through field and forest, lawn and drive, like Indian scouts in settler country. Twice they had been caught, once to have dogs set on them—three boxers and two mastiffs, which certainly would have torn them to very small pieces if the boys had not been more lucky than swift—and once by a dear little old lady who swamped them sickeningly with jelly sandwiches and lonely affection. But over the saga of their adventures, their two captures served to spice the adventure; two failures out of a hundred successes (for many of these places were visited frequently) was a proud record.

So they took a trolley to the end of the line, and walked a mile, and went straight ahead where the road turned at a discreet *No Admittance* sign of expensive manufacture and a high degree of weathering. They proceeded through a small wild wood, and came at last to an apparently unscalable granite wall.

Sammy had discovered this wall the week before, roaming alone; he had waited for Guy to accompany him before challenging it, and Guy was touched. He was also profoundly excited by the wall itself. Anything this size should have been found, conjectured about, campaigned against, battled and conquered long since. But as well as being a high wall, a long wall, and mysterious, it was a distant wall, a discreet wall. No road touched it but its own driveway, which was primitive, meandering, and led to iron-bound, solid oak gates without a chink or crack to peek through.

They could not climb it nor breach it—but they crossed it. An ancient maple on this side held hands with a chestnut over the crown of the wall, and they went over like a couple of squirrels.

They had, in their ghost-like way, haunted many an elaborate property, but never had they seen such maintenance, such manicure, such polish of a piece of land and, as Sammy said, awed out of his usual brashness, as they stood in a solid marble pergola overlooking green plush acres of rolling lawn, copses of carved boxwood, park-like woods and streams with little Japanese bridges and, in their bends, humorous little rock-gardens: “—and there’s goddam *miles* of it.”

They had wandered a bit, that first time, and had learned that there were after all some people there. They saw a tractor far away, pulling a slanted gang of mowers across one of the green-plush fields. (The owners doubtless called it a lawn; it was a field.) The machines, rare in that time, cut a swath all of thirty feet wide, “and that,” Sammy said, convulsing them, “ain’t hay.” And then they had seen the house—

Well, a glimpse. Breaking out of the woods, Guy had felt himself snatched

back. "House up there," said Sammy. "Someone'll see us." There was a confused impression of a white hill that was itself the house, or part of it; towers, turrets, castellations, crenellations; a fairy-tale palace set in this legendary landscape. They had not been able to see it again; it was so placed that it could be approached nowhere secretly nor even spied upon. They were struck literally speechless by the sight and for most of an hour had nothing to say, and that expressible only by wags of the head. Ultimately they referred to it as "the shack," and it was in this vein that they later called their final discovery "the ol' swimmin' hole."

It was across a creek and over a wooded hill. Two more hills rose to meet the wood, and cupped between the three was a pond, perhaps a lake. It was roughly L-shaped, and all around it were shadowed inlets, grottoes, inconspicuous stone steps leading here to a rustic pavilion set about with flowers, there to a concealed forest glade harboring a tiny formal garden.

But the lake, the ol' swimmin' hole...

They went swimming, splashing as little as possible and sticking to the shore. They explored two inlets to the right (a miniature waterfall and a tiny beach of obviously imported golden sand) and three to the left (a square-cut one, lined with tile the color of patina, with a black glass diving tower overhanging water that must have been dredged to twenty feet; a little beach of snow-white sand; and one they dared not enter, for fear of harming the fleet of perfect sailing ships, none more than a foot long, which lay at anchor; but they trod water until they were bone-cold, gawking at the miniature model waterfront with little pushcarts in the street, and lamp-posts, and old-fashioned houses) and then, weary, hungry and awestruck, they had gone home.

And Sammy cracked the secret he had been keeping— the thing which made this day an occasion: he was to go wild-hairing off the next day in an effort to join Chennault in China.

Guy Gibbon, overwhelmed, made the only gesture he could think of: he devotedly swore he would not go trespassing again until Sammy got back.

"Death from choriocarcinoma," Dr. Weber began, "is the result of—"

"But he won't die," she said. "I won't let him."

"My dear," Dr. Weber was a small man with round shoulders and a hawk's face. "I don't mean to be unkind, but I can use all the euphemisms and kindle all the false hope, or I can do as you have asked me to do—explain the condition and make a prognosis. I can't do both."

Dr. Rathburn said gently, "Why don't you go and lie down? I'll come when we've finished here and tell you all about it."

"I don't want to lie down," she said fiercely. "And I wasn't asking you to spare me anything, Dr. Weber. I simply said I would not let him die. There's nothing in that statement which keeps you from telling me the truth."

Keogh smiled. Weber caught him at it and was startled; Keogh saw his surprise. "I know her better than you do," he said, with a touch of pride. "You don't have to pull any punches."

"Thanks, Keogh," she said. She leaned forward. "Go ahead, Dr. Weber."

Weber looked at her. Snatched from his work two thousand miles away, brought to a place he had never known existed, of a magnificence which attacked his confidence in his own eyes, meeting a woman of power—every sort of power—quite beyond his experience... Weber had thought himself beyond astonishment. Shock, grief, fear, deprivation like hers he had seen before, of course; what doctor has not? but when Keogh had told her baldly that this disease killed in six weeks, *always*, she had flinched, closed her eyes for an interminable moment, and had then said softly, "Tell us everything you can about this—this disease, Doctor." And she had added, for the first time, "He isn't going to die. I won't let him"; and the way she held her head, the way her full voice handled the words, he almost believed her. Heaven knows, he wished he could. And so he found he could be astonished yet again.

He made an effort to detach himself, and became not a man, not this particular patient's doctor, but a sort of source-book. He began again:

"Death from choriocarcinoma is a little unlike other deaths from malignancies. Ordinarily a cancer begins locally, and sends its chains and masses of wild cells growing through the organ on which it began. Death can result from the failure of that organ; liver, kidney, brain, what have you. Or the cancer suddenly breaks up and spreads through the body, starting colonies throughout the system. This is called metastasis. Death results then from the loss of efficiency of many organs instead of just one. Of course, both these things can happen—the almost complete impairment of the originally cancerous organ, and metastatic effects at the same time.

"Chorio, on the other hand, doesn't originally involve a vital organ. Vital to the species, perhaps, but not to the individual." He permitted himself a dry smile. "This is probably a startling concept to most people in this day and age, but it's nonetheless true. However, sex cells, at their most basic and primitive, have peculiarities not shared by other body cells.

"Have you ever heard of the condition known as ectopic pregnancy?" He directed his question at Keogh, who nodded. "A fertilized ovum fails to descend to the uterus; instead it attaches itself to the side of the very fine tube between the ovaries and the womb. And at first everything proceeds well with it—and this is the point I want you to grasp—because in spite of the fact that only the uterus is truly specialized for this work, the tube wall not only supports the growing ovum but feeds it. It actually forms what we call a counterplacenta; it enfolds the early fetus and nurtures it. The fetus, of course, has a high survival value, and is able to get along quite well on the plasma which the counterplacenta supplies it with. And it grows—it grows fantastically. Since the tube is very fine—you'd have difficulty getting the



smallest needle up through it—it can no longer contain the growing fetus, and ruptures. Unless it is removed at that time, the tissues outside will quite as readily take on the work of a real placenta and uterus, and in six or seven months, if the mother survives that long, will create havoc in the abdomen.

“All right then: back to chorio. Since the cells involved are sex cells, and cancerous to boot, they divide and re-divide wildly, without pattern or special form. They develop in an infinite variety of shapes and sizes and forms. The law of averages dictates that a certain number of these—and the number of distorted cells is astronomical—resemble fertilized ova. Some of them resemble them so closely that I personally would not enjoy the task of distinguishing between them and the real thing. However, the body as a whole is not that particular; anything which even roughly resembles a fertilized egg-cell is capable of commanding that counterplacenta.

“Now consider the source of these cells—physiologically speaking, gland tissue—a mass of capillary tubes and blood vessels. Each and every one of these does its best to accept and nurture these fetal imitations, down to the tiniest of them. The thin walls of the capillaries, however, break down easily under such an effort, and the imitations—selectively, the best of them, too, because the tissues yield most readily to them—they pass into the capillaries and then into the bloodstream.

“There is one place and only one place where they can be combed out; and it’s a place rich in oxygen, lymph, blood and plasma: the lungs. The lungs enthusiastically take on the job of forming placentae for these cells, and nurturing them. But for every segment of lung given over to gestating an imitation fetus, there is one less segment occupied with the job of oxygenating blood. Ultimately the lungs fail, and death results from oxygen starvation.” Rathburn spoke up. “For years chorio was regarded as a lung disease, and the cancerous gonads as a sort of side effect.”

“But lung cancer—” Keogh began to object.

“It isn’t lung cancer, don’t you see? Given enough time, it might be, through metastasis. But there is never enough time. Chorio doesn’t have to wait for that, to kill. That’s why it’s so swift.” He tried not to look at the girl, and failed; he said it anyway: “And certain.”

“Just exactly how do you treat it?”

Weber raised his hands and let them fall. It was precisely the gesture Rathburn had made earlier, and Keogh wondered distantly whether they taught it in medical schools. “Something to kill the pain. Orchidectomy might make the patient last a little longer, by removing the supply of wild cells to the bloodstream. But it wouldn’t save him. Metastasis has already taken place by the time the first symptom appears. The cancer becomes generalized... perhaps the lung condition is only God’s mercy.”

“What’s ‘orchidectomy’?” asked Keogh.

“Amputation of the—uh—source,” said Rathburn uncomfortably.

“No!” cried the girl.

Keogh sent her a pitying look. There was that about him which was cynical, sophisticated, and perhaps coldly angry at anyone who lived as he could never live, had what he could never have. It was a stirring of the grave ancient sin which old Cap’n Gamaliel had isolated in his perspicacious thoughts. Sure, amputate, if it’ll help, he thought. What do you think you’re preserving—his virility? What good’s it to you now?... but sending her the look, he encountered something different from the romantically based horror and shock he expected. Her thick level brows were drawn together, her whole face intense with taut concentration. “Let me think,” she said, oddly.

“You really should—” Rathburn began, but she shushed him with any impatient gesture. The three men exchanged a glance and settled back; it was as if someone, something had told them clearly and specifically to wait. What they were waiting for, they could not imagine.

The girl sat with her eyes closed. A minute crawled by. “Daddy used to say,” she said, so quietly that she must surely be talking to herself, “that there’s always a way. All you have to do is think of it.”

There was another long silence and she opened her eyes. There was a burning down in them somewhere; it made Keogh uneasy. She said, “And once he told me that I could have anything I wanted; all it had to be was... possible. And... the only way you can find out if a thing is impossible is to try it.”

“That wasn’t Sam Wyke,” said Keogh. “That was Keogh.”

She wet her lips and looked at them each in turn. She seemed not to see them at all. “I’m not going to let him die,” she said. “You’ll see.”

Sammy Stem came back two years later, on leave, and full of plans to join the Army Air Force. He’d had, as he himself said, the hell kicked out of him in China and a lot of the hellishness as well. But there was enough of the old Sammy left to make wild wonderful plans about going trespassing; and they knew just where they were going. The new Sammy, however, demanded a binge and a broad first.

Guy, two years out of high school, working for a living, and by nature neither binger nor wencher, went along only too gladly. Sam seemed to have forgotten about the “ol’ swimmin’ hole” at first, and halfway through the evening, in a local bar-and-dance emporium, Guy was about to despair of his ever remembering it, when Sam himself brought it up, recalling to Guy that he had once written Sam a letter asking Sam if it had really happened. Guy had, in his turn, forgotten the letter, and after that they had a good time with “remember-when”—and they made plans to go trespassing the very next day, and bring a lunch. And start early.

Then there was a noisy involvement with some girls, and a lot more

drinks, and out of the haze and movement somewhere after midnight, Guy emerged on a sidewalk looking at Sammy shoveling a girl into a taxicab. "Hey!" he called out, "what about the you know, ol' swimmin' hole?"

"Call me Abacus, you can count on me," said Sammy, and laughed immoderately. The girl with him pulled at his arm; he shook her off and weaved over to Guy. "Listen," he said, and gave a distorted wink, "if this makes—and it will—I'm starting no early starts. Tell you what, you go on out there and meet me by that sign says keep out or we'll castigate you. Say eleven o'clock. If I can't make it by then I'm dead or something." He bellowed at the cab, "You gon' kill me, honey?" and the girl called back, "I will if you don't get into this taxi." "See what I mean?" said Sammy in a grand drunken non-sequitur, "I got to go get killed." He zigged away, needing no zag because even walking sidewise he reached the cab in a straight line, and Guy saw no more of him that leave.

That was hard to take, mostly because there was no special moment at which he knew Sammy wasn't coming. He arrived ten minutes late, after making a super-human effort to get there. His stomach was sour from the unaccustomed drinking, and he was sandy-eyed and ache-jointed from lack of sleep. He knew that the greater probability was that Sammy had not arrived yet or would not at all; yet the nagging possibility existed that he had come early and gone straight in. Guy waited around for a full hour, and some more minutes until the little road was clear of traffic and sounds of traffic, and then plunged alone into the woods, past the No Trespassing sign, and in to the wall. He had trouble finding the two trees, and once over the wall, he could not get his bearings for a while; he was pleased, of course, to find the unbelievably perfect lawns still there by the flawless acre, the rigidly controlled museums of carven box, the edge-trimmed, rolled-gravel walks meandering prettily through the woods. The pleasure, however, was no more than confirmation of his memory, and went no further; the day was spoiled.

Guy reached the lake at nearly one o'clock, hot, tired, ravenously hungry and unpleasantly nervous. The combination hit him in the stomach and made it echo; he sat down on the bank and ate. He wolfed down the food he had brought for himself and Sammy's as well—odds and ends carelessly tossed into a paper sack in the bleary early hoars. The cake was moldy but he ate it anyway. The orange juice was warm and had begun to ferment. And stubbornly, he determined to swim, because that was what he had come for.

He chose the beach with the golden sand. Under a thick cover of junipers be found a stone bench and table. He undressed here and scuttled across the beach and into the water.

He had meant it to be a mere dip, so he could say he'd done it. But around the little headland to the left was the rectangular cove with the diving platform; and he remembered the harbor of model ships; and then movement diagonally across the foot of the lake's L caught his eye, and he saw models—

not the anchored ships this time, but racing sloops, which put out from an inlet and crossed its mouth and sailed in again; they must be mounted on some sort of underwater wheel or endless chain, and moved as the breeze took them. He all but boiled straight across to them, then decided to be wise and go round.

He swam to the left and the rocky shore, and worked his way along it. Clinging close (the water seemed bottomless here) he rounded the point and came face to face (literally; they touched) with a girl.

She was young—near his age—and his first impression was of eyes of too complex an architecture, blue-white teeth with pointed canines quite unlike the piano-key regularity considered beautiful in these times, and a wide cape of rich brown hair afloat around her shoulders. By then his gasp was completed, and in view of the fact that in gasping he had neglected to remove his mouth from the water, he was shut off from outside impressions for a strangling time, until he felt a firm grasp on his left biceps and found himself returned to the side of the rock.

“Th-thanks,” he said hoarsely as she swam back a yard and trod water. “I’m not supposed to be here,” he added inanely.

“I guess I’m not either. But I thought you lived here. I thought you were a faun.”

“Boy am I glad to hear that. I mean about you. All I am is a trespasser. Boy.”

“I’m not a boy.”

“It was just a finger of speech,” he said, using one of the silly expressions which come to a person as he grows, and blessedly pass. She seemed not to react to it at all, for she said gravely, “You have the most beautiful eyes I have ever seen. They are made of aluminum. And your hair is all wiggly.”

He could think of nothing to say to that, but tried; all that emerged was, “We’ll, it’s early yet,” and suddenly they were laughing together. She was so strange, so different. She spoke in a grave, unaccented, and utterly incautious idiom as if she thought strange thoughts and-spoke them right out. “Also,” she said, “you have lovely lips. They’re pale blue. You ought to get out of the water.”

“I can’t!”

She considered that for a moment, treading away from him and then back to the yard’s distance. “Where are your things?”

He pointed across the narrow neck of the lake which he had circumnavigated.

“Wait for me over there,” she said, and suddenly swam close, so close she could dip her chin and look straight into his eyes. “You got to,” she said fiercely.

“Oh I will,” he promised, and struck out for the opposite shore. She hung

to the rock, watching him.

Swimming, reaching hard, stretching for distance warmed him, and the chill and its accompanying vague ache diminished. Then he had a twinge of stomach-ache, and he drew up his knees to ease it. When he tried to extend himself again, he could, but it hurt too much. He drew up his knees again, and the pain followed inward so that to flex again was out of the question. He drew his knees up still tighter, and tighter still followed the pain. He needed air badly by then, threw up his head, tried to roll over on his back; but with his knees drawn up, everything came out all wrong. He inhaled at last because he had to, but the air was gone away somewhere; he floundered upward for it until the pressure in his ears told him he was swimming downward. Blackness came upon him and receded, and came again, he let it come for a tired instant, and was surrounded by light, and drew one lungful of air and one of water, and got the blackness again; this time it stayed with him...

Still beautiful in her bed, but morphine-clouded, fly-papered, and struggling in viscous sleep, he lay with monsters swarming in his veins...

Quietly, in a corner of the room, she spoke with Keogh: "You don't understand me. You didn't understand me yesterday when I cried out at the idea of that—that operation. Keogh, I love him, but I'm *me*. Loving him doesn't mean I've stopped thinking. Loving him means I'm more me than ever, not less. It means I can do anything I did before, only more, only better. That's why I fell in love with him. That's why I am in love with him. Weren't you ever in love, Keogh?"

He looked at the way her hair fell, and the earnest placement of her thick soft brows, and he said, "I haven't thought much about it."

"There's always a way. All you have to do is think of it," she quoted. "Keogh, I've accepted what Dr. Rathburn said. After I left you yesterday I went to the library and tore the heart out of some books... they're right, Rathburn and Weber. And I've thought and I've thought... trying the way Daddy would, to turn everything upside down and backwards, to look for a new way of thinking. He won't die, Keogh; I'm not going to let him die."

"You said you accepted—"

"Oh, part of him. Most of him, if you like. We all die, bit by bit, all the time, and it doesn't bother us because most of the dead parts are replaced. Hell... he'll lose more parts, sooner, but—after it's over, he'll be himself again." She said it with superb confidence—perhaps it was childlike. If so, it was definitely not childish.

"You have an idea," said Keogh positively. As he had pointed out to the doctors, he knew her.

"All those—those things in his blood," she said quietly. "The struggle they go through... they're trying to survive; did you ever think of it that way, Keogh? They want to live. They want most terribly to go on living."

“I hadn’t thought about it.”

“His body wants them to live too. It welcomes them wherever they lodge. Dr. Weber said so.”

“You’ve got hold of something,” said Keogh flatly, “and whatever it is I don’t think I like it.”

“I don’t want you to like it,” she said in the same strange quiet voice. He looked swiftly at her and saw again the burning deep in her eyes. He had to look away. She said, “I want you to hate it. I want you to fight it. You have one of the most wonderful minds I have ever known, Keogh, and I want you to think up every argument you can think of against it. For every argument I’ll find an answer, and then we’ll know what to do.”

“You’d better go ahead,” he said reluctantly.

“I had a pretty bad quarrel with Dr. Weber this morning,” she said suddenly.

“This m—when?” He looked at his watch; it was still early.

“About three, maybe four. In his room. I went there and woke him up.”

“Look, you don’t do things like that to Weber!”

“I do. Anyway, he’s gone.”

He rose to his feet, the rare bright patches of anger showing in his cheeks. He took a breath, let it out, and sat down again. “You’d better tell me about it.”

“In the library,” she said, “there’s a book on genetics, and it mentions some experiments on Belgian hares. The does were impregnated without sperm, with some sort of saline or alkaline solution.”

“I remember something about it.” He was well used to her circuitous way of approaching something important. She built conversational points, not like a hired contractor, but like an architect. Sometimes she brought in portions of her lumber and stacked them beside the structure. If she ever did that, it was material she needed and would use. He waited.

“The does gave birth to baby rabbits, all female. The interesting thing was that they were identical to each other and to the mother. Even the blood-vessel patterns in the eyeball were so similar that an expert might be fooled by photographs of them. ‘Impossibly similar’ is what one of the experimenters called it. They had to be identical because everything they inherited was from the mother. I woke Dr. Weber up to tell him about that.”

“And he told you he’d read the book.”

“He wrote it,” she said gently. “And then I told him that if he could do that with a Belgian hare, he could do it with”—she nodded toward her big bed—“him.”

Then she was quiet, while Keogh rejected the idea, found it stuck to his mind’s hand, not to be shaken off; brought it to his mind’s eye and shuddered

away from it, shook again and failed, slowly brought it close and turned it over, and turned it again.

“Take one of those—those things like fertilized ova— make it grow...”

“You don’t *make* it grow. It wants desperately to grow. And not one of them, Keogh. You have thousands. You have hundreds more every hour.”

“Oh my God.”

“It came to me when Dr. Rathburn suggested the operation. It came to me all at once, a miracle. If you love someone that much,” she said, looking at the sleeper, “miracles happen. But you have to be willing to help them happen.” She looked at him directly, with an intensity that made him move back in his chair. “I can have anything I want—all it has to be is possible. We just have to make it possible. That’s why I went to Dr. Weber this morning. To ask him.”

“He said it wasn’t possible.”

“He said that at first. After a half hour or so he said the odds against it were in the billions or trillions... but you see, as soon as he said that, he was saying it was possible.”

“What did you do then?”

“I dared him to try.”

“And that’s why he left?”

“Yes.”

“You’re mad,” he said before he could stop himself. She seemed not to resent it. She sat calmly, wailing.

“Look,” said Keogh at last, “Weber said those distorted —uh—*things* were *like* fertilized ova. He never said they were. He could have said—well, I’ll say it for him— they’re *not* fertilized ova.”

“But he did say they were—some of them, anyway, and especially those that reached the lungs—were very much like ova. How close do you have to get before there’s no real difference at all?”

“It can’t be. It just can’t.”

“Weber said that. And I asked him if he had ever tried.”

“All right, all right! It can’t happen, but just to keep this silly argument going, suppose you got something that would grow. You won’t, of course. But if you did, how would you keep it growing. It has to be fed, it has to be kept at a certain critical temperature, a certain amount of acid or alkali will kill it... you don’t just plant something like that in the yard.”

“Already they’ve taken ova from one cow, planted them in another, and gotten calves. There’s a man in Australia who plans to raise blooded cattle from scrub cows that way.”

“You *have* done your homework.”

“Oh, that isn’t all. There’s a Dr. Carrel in New Jersey who has been able

to keep chicken tissue alive for months—he says indefinitely—in a nutrient solution, in a temperature-controlled jar in his lab. It grows, Keogh! It grows so much he has to cut it away every once in a while.”

“This is crazy. This is—it’s insane,” he growled. “And what do you think you’ll get if you bring one of these monsters to term?”

“We’ll bring thousands of them to term,” she said composedly. “And one of them will be—*him*.” She leaned forward abruptly, and her even tone of voice broke; a wildness grew through her face and voice, and though it was quiet, it shattered him: “It will be his flesh, the pattern of him, his own substance grown again. His hair, Keogh. His fingerprints. His—eyes. His—his *self*.”

“I can’t—” Keogh shook himself like a wet spaniel, but it changed nothing; he was still here, she, the bed, the sleeper, and this dreadful, this inconceivably horrible, wrong idea.

She smiled then, put out her hand and touched him; incredibly, it was a mother’s smile, warm and comforting, a mother’s loving, protective touch; her voice was full of affection. “Keogh, if it won’t work, it won’t work, no matter what we do. Then you’ll be right. I think it will work. It’s what I want. Don’t you want me to have what I want?”

He had to smile, and she smiled back. “You’re a young devil,” he said ardently. “Got me coming and going, haven’t you? Why did you want me to fight it?”

“I didn’t,” she said, “but if you fight me, you’ll come up with problems nobody else could possibly think of, and once we’ve thought of them, we’ll be ready, don’t you see? I’ll fight with you, Keogh,” she said, shifting her strange bright spectrum from tenderness to a quiet, convinced, invincible certainty. “I’ll fight with you, I’ll lift and carry, I’ll buy and sell and kill if I have to, but I am going to bring him back. You know something, Keogh?”

She waved her hand in a gesture that included him, the room, the castle and grounds and all the other castle and grounds; the pseudonyms, the ships and trains, the factories and exchanges, the mountains and acres and mines and banks and the thousands of people which, taken together, were Wyke: “I always knew that all this *was*,” she said, “and I’ve come to understand that this is mine. But I used to wonder sometimes, what it was all for. Now I know. Now I know.”

A mouth on his mouth, a weight on his stomach. He felt boneless and nauseated, limp as grease drooling. The light around him was green, and all shapes blurred.

The mouth on his mouth, the weight on his stomach, a breath of air, welcome but too warm, too moist. He needed it desperately but did not like it,



and found a power-plant full of energy to gather it up in his lungs and fling it away; but his weakness so filtered all that effort that it emerged in a faint bubbling sigh.

The mouth on his mouth again, and the weight on his stomach and another breath. He tried to turn his head but someone held him by the nose. He blew out the needed, unsatisfactory air and replaced it by a little gust of his own inhalation. On this he coughed; it was too rich, pure, too good. He coughed as one does over a pickle-barrel; good air hurt his lungs.

He felt his head and shoulders lifted, shifted, by which he learned that he had been flat on his back on stone, or something flat and quite that hard, and was now on smooth, firm softness. The good sharp air came and went, his weak coughs fewer, until he fell into a dazed peace. The face that bent over his was too close to focus, or he had lost the power to focus; either way, he didn't care. Drowsily he stared up into the blurred brightness of that face and listened uncritically to the voice—

—the voice crooning wordlessly and comfortingly, and somehow, in its wordlessness, creating new expressions for joy and delight for which words would not do. Then after all there were words, half sung, half whispered; and he couldn't catch them, and he couldn't catch them and then... and then he was sure he heard: "How could it be, such a magic as this: all this and the eyes as well..." Then, demanding, "You are the shape of the not-you: tell me, are *you* in there?"

He opened his eyes wide and saw her face clearly at last and the dark hair, and the eyes were green—true deep sea-green. Her tangled hair, drying, crowned her like vines, and the leafy roof close above seemed part of her and the green eyes, and threw green light on the unaccountably blond transparency of her cheeks. He genuinely did not know, at the moment, what she was. She had said to him (was it years ago?) "I thought you were a faun..." he had not, at the moment, much consciousness, not to say whimsy, at his command; she was simply something unrelated to anything in his experience.

He was aware of griping, twisting pain rising, filling, about to explode in his upper abdomen. Some thick wire within him had kinked, and knowing well that it should be unbent, he made a furious, rebellious effort and pulled it through. The explosion came, but in nausea, not in agony. Convulsively he turned his head, surged upward, and let it go.

He saw with too much misery to be horrified the bright vomit surging on and around her knee, and running into the crevice between thigh and calf where she had her leg bent and tucked under her, and the clots left there as the fluid ran away. And she—

She sat where she was, held his head, cradled him in her arms, soothed him and crooned to him and said that was good, good; he'd feel better now. The weakness floored him and receded; then shakily he pressed away from her, sat up, bowed his head and gasped for breath. "Whooo," he said.

“Boy,” she said; and she said it in exact concert with him. He clung to his shins and wiped the nausea-tears from his left eye, then his right, on his knee-cap. “Boy oh boy,” he said, and she said it with him in concert.

So at last he looked at her.

He looked at her, and would never forget what he saw, and exactly the way it was. Late sunlight made into lace by the bower above clothed her; she leaned toward him, one small hand flat on the ground, one slim supporting arm straight and straight down; her weight turned up that shoulder and her head tilted toward it as if drawn down by the heavy darkness of her hair. It gave a sense of yielding, as if she were fragile, which he knew she was not. Her other hand lay open across one knee, the palm up and the fingers not quite relaxed, as if they held something; and indeed they did, for a spot of light, gold turned coral by her flesh, lay in her palm. She held it just so, just right, unconsciously, and her hand held that rare knowledge that closed, a hand may not give nor receive. For his lifetime he had it all, each tiniest part, even to the gleaming big toenail at the underside of her other calf. And she was smiling, and her complex eyes adored.

Guy Gibbon knew his life’s biggest moment during the moment itself, a rarity in itself, and of all times of life, it was time to say the unforgettable, for anything he said now would be.

He shuddered, and then smiled back at her. “Oh... *boy*,” he breathed.

And again they were laughing together until, puzzled, he stopped and asked, “Where am I?”

She would not answer, so he closed his eyes and puzzled it out. Pine bower... undress somewhere... swimming. Oh, swimming. And then across the lake, and he had met— He opened his eyes and looked at her and said, “You.” Then swimming back, cold, his “gut full of too much food and warm juice and moldy cake to boot, and, ”... you must have saved my life.“

“Well somebody had to. You were dead.”

“I should’ve been.”

“No!” she cried. “Don’t you ever say that again!” And he could see she was absolutely serious.

“I only meant, for stupidity. I ate a lot of junk, and some cake I think was moldy. Too much, when I was hot and tired, and then like a bonehead I went right into the water, so anybody who does that deserves to—”

“I meant it,” she said levelly, “never again. Didn’t you ever hear of the old tradition of the field of battle, when one man saved another’s life, that life became his to do what he wanted with?”

“What do you want to do with mine?”

“That depends,” she said thoughtfully. “You have to give it. I can’t just take it.” She knelt then and sat back on her heels, her hands trailing pine-

needles across the bower's paved stone floor. She bowed her head and her hair swung forward. He thought she was watching him through it; he could not be sure.

He said, and the thought grew so large that it quelled his voice and made him whisper. "Do you want it?"

"Oh, yes," she said, whispering too. When he moved to her and put her hair back to see if she was watching him, he found her eyes closed, and tears pressed through. He reached for her gently, but before he could touch her she sprang up and straight at the leafy wall. Her long golden body passed through it without a sound, and seemed to hang suspended outside; then it was gone. He put his head through and saw her flashing along under green water. He hesitated, then got an acrid whiff of his own vomit. The water looked clean and the golden sand just what he ached to scrub himself with. He climbed out of the bower and floundered clumsily down the bank and into the water.

After his first plunge he came up, and spun about, looking for her, but she was gone.

Numbly he swam to the tiny beach and, kneeling, scoured himself with the fine sand. He dove and rinsed, and then (hoping) scrubbed himself all over again. And rinsed. But he did not see her.

He stood in the late rays of the sun to dry, and looked off across the lake. His heart leapt when he saw white movement, and sank again as he saw it was just the wheel of boats bobbing and sliding there.

He plodded up to the bower—now at last he saw it was the one behind which he had undressed—and he sank down on the bench.

This was a place where tropical fish swam in ocean water where there was no ocean, and where fleets of tiny perfect boats sailed with no one sailing them and no one watching, and where priceless statues stood hidden in clipped and barbered glades deep in the woods and—and he hadn't seen it all; what other impossibilities were possible in this impossible place?

And besides, he'd been sick. (He wrinkled his nostrils.) Damn near... drowned. Out of his head for sure, for a while anyway. She couldn't be real. Hadn't he noticed a greenish cast to her flesh, or was that just the light?... anybody who could make a place like this, run a place like this, could jimmy up some kind of machine to hypnotize you like in the science fiction stories.

He stirred uneasily. Maybe someone was watching him, even now.

Hurriedly, he began to dress.

So she wasn't real. Or maybe all of it wasn't real. He'd bumped into that other trespasser across the lake there, and that was real, but then when he'd almost drowned, he'd dreamed up the rest.

Only—he touched his mouth. He'd dreamed up someone blowing the breath back into him. He'd heard about that somewhere, but it sure wasn't what they were teaching this year at the Y.

*You are the shape of the not-you. Are you in there?*

What did that mean?

He finished dressing dazedly. He muttered, "What'd I hafta go an' eat that goddam cake for?" He wondered what he would tell Sammy. If she wasn't real, Sammy wouldn't know what he was talking about. If she was real there's only one thing he would talk about, yes, and from then on. You mean you had her in that place and all you did was throw up on her? No—he wouldn't tell Sammy. Or anybody.

And he'd be a bachelor all his life.

Boy oh boy. What an introduction. First she has to save your life and then you don't know what to say and then oh, look what you had to go and do. But anyway—she wasn't real.

He wondered what her name was. Even if she wasn't real. Lots of people don't use their real names.

He climbed out of the bower and crossed the silent pine carpet behind it, and he shouted. It was not a word at all, and had nothing about it that tried to make it one.

She was standing there waiting for him. She wore a quiet brown dress and low heels and carried a brown leather pocketbook, and her hair was braided and tied neatly and sedately in a coronet. She looked, too, as if she had turned down some inward tone control so that her skin did not radiate. She looked ready to disappear, not into thin air, but into a crowd—any crowd, as soon as she could get close to one. In a crowd he would have walked right past her, certainly, but for the shape of her eyes. She stepped up to him quickly and laid her hand on his cheek and laughed up at him. Again he saw the whiteness of those unusual eyeteeth, so sharp...

No blusher in history was ever stopped by that observation. He asked, "Which way do you go?"

She looked at his eyes, one, the other, both, quickly; then folded her long hands together around the strap of her pocketbook and looked down at them.

"With you," she said softly.

This was only one of the many things she said to him, moment by moment; which gained meaning for him as time went on. He took her back to town and to dinner, and then to the West Side address she gave him and they stood outside it all night talking. In six weeks they were married.

"How could I argue," said Weber to Dr. Rathburn.

They stood together watching a small army of workmen swarming over the gigantic stone barn a quarter-mile from the castle, which, incidentally, was invisible from this point and unknown to the men. Work had begun at three

the previous afternoon, continued all night. There was nothing, nothing at all that Dr. Weber had specified which was not only given him, but on the site or already installed.

“I know,” said Rathburn, who did.

“Not only, how could I argue,” said Weber, “why should I? A man has plans, ambitions. That Keogh, what an approach! That’s the first thing he went after—my plans for myself! That’s where he starts. And suddenly everything you ever wanted to do or be or have is handed to you or promised to you, and no fooling about the promise either.”

“*Oh* no. They don’t need to fool anybody... You want to pass a prognosis?”

“You mean on the youngster there?” He looked at Rathburn. “Oh—that’s not what you mean... You’re asking me if I can bring one of those surrogate fetuses to term. An opinion like that would make a damn fool out of a man, and this is no job for a damn fool. All I can tell you is, I tried it—and that is something I wouldn’t’ve dreamed of doing if it hadn’t been for her and her crazy idea. I left here at four A.M. with some throat smears and by nine I had a half dozen of them isolated and in nutrient solution. Beef blood plasma—the quickest thing I could get ready. And I got mitosis. They divided, and in a few hours I could see two of ’em dimpling to form the gastro-sphore. That was evidence enough to get going; that’s all I think and that’s all I told them on the phone. And by the time I got here,” he added, waving toward the big barn, “there’s a research lab four fifths built, big enough for a city medical center. Argue?” he demanded, returning to Dr. Rathburn’s original question. “How could I argue? Why should I?... And that *girl*. She’s a force, like gravity. She can turn on so much pressure, and I mean by herself and personally, that she could probably get anything in the world she wanted even if she didn’t own it, the world I mean. Put that in the northeast entrance!” he bellowed at a foreman, “I’ll be down to show you just where it goes.” He turned to Rathburn; he was a man on fire. “I got to go.”

“Anything I can do,” said Dr. Rathburn, “just say it.” “That’s the wonderful part of it,” said Weber. “That’s what everybody around here keeps saying, and;they mean it!” He trotted down toward the barn, and Rathburn turned toward the castle.

About a month after his last venture at trespassing, Guy Gibbon was coming home from work when a man at the corner put away a newspaper and, still folding it, said, “Gibbon?”

“That’s right,” said Guy, a little sharply.

The man looked him up and down, quickly, but giving an impression of such thoroughness, efficiency, and experience that Guy would not have been

surprised to learn that the man had not only catalogued his clothes and their source, their state of maintenance and a computation therefrom of his personal habits, but also his state of health and even his blood type. "My name's Keogh," said the man. "Does that mean anything to you?"

"No."

"Sylva never mentioned the name?"

"Sylva! N-no, she didn't."

"Let's go somewhere and have a drink. I'd like to talk to you." Something had pleased this man: Guy wondered what. "Well, okay," he said. "Only I don't drink much, but well, okay."

They found a bar in the neighborhood with booths in the back. Keogh had a Scotch and soda and Guy, after some hesitation, ordered beer. Guy said, "You know her?"

"Most of her life. Do you?"

"What? Well, sure. We're going to get married." He looked studiously into his beer and said uncomfortably, "What are you anyway, Mr. Keogh?"

"You might say," said Keogh, "I'm *in loco parentis*" He waited for a response, then added, "Sort of a guardian."

"She never said anything about a guardian."

"I can understand that. What has she told you about herself?"

Guy's discomfort descended to a level of shyness, diffidence, even a touch of fear—which did not alter the firmness of his words, however they were spoken. "I don't know you, Mr. Keogh. I don't think I ought to answer any questions about Sylva. Or me. Or anything." He looked up at the man. Keogh searched deeply, then smiled. It was an unpracticed and apparently slightly painful process with him, but was genuine for all that. "Good!" he barked, and rose. "Come on." He left the booth and Guy, more than a little startled, followed. They went to the phone booth in the corner. Keogh dropped in a nickel, dialed, and waited, his eyes fixed on Guy. Then Guy had to listen to one side of the conversation:

"I'm here with Guy Gibbon." (Guy had to notice that Keogh identified himself only with his voice.)

"Of course I knew about it. That's a silly question, girl."

"Because it *is* my business. *You* are my business."

"Stop it? I'm not trying to stop anything. I just have to know, that's all."

"All right. All right... He's here. He won't talk about you or anything, which is good. Yes, very good. Will you please tell him to open up?"

And he handed the receiver to a startled Guy, who said tremulously, "Uh, hello," to it while watching Keogh's impassive face.

Her voice suffused and flooded him, changed this whole unsettling

experience to something different and good. "Guy, darling,"

"Sylva—"

"It's all right. I should have told you sooner, I guess. It had to come some time. Guy, you can tell Keogh anything you like. Anything he asks."

"Why, honey? Who is he, anyway?"

There was a pause, then a strange little laugh. "He can explain that better than I can. You want us to be married, Guy?"

"Oh yes!"

"Well all right then. Nobody can change that, nobody but you. And listen, Guy. I'll live anywhere, any way you want to live. That's the real truth and all of it, do you believe me?"

"I always believe you."

"All right then. So that's what we'll do. Now you go and talk to Keogh. Tell him anything he wants to know. He has to do the same. I love you, Guy."

"Me too," said Guy, watching Keogh's face. "Well, okay then," he added when she said nothing further. "Bye." He hung up and he and Keogh had a long talk.

"It hurts him," she whispered to Dr. Rathburn.

"I know." He shook his head sympathetically. "There's just so much morphine you can ram into a man, though."

"Just a little more?"

"Maybe a little," he said sadly. He went to his bag and got the needle. Sylva kissed the sleeping man tenderly and left the room. Keogh was waiting for her.

He said, "This has got to stop, girl."

"Why?" she responded ominously.

"Let's get out of here."

She had known Keogh so long, and so well, that she was sure he had no surprises for her. But this voice, this look, these were something new in Keogh. He held the door for her, so she preceded him through it and then went where he silently led.

They left the castle and took the path through a heavy copse and over the brow of the hill which overlooked the barn. The parking lot, which had once been a barnyard, was full of automobiles. A white ambulance approached; another was unloading at the northeast platform. A muffled generator purred somewhere behind the building, and smoke rose from the stack of the new stone boiler room at the side. They both looked avidly at the building but did not comment. The path took them along the crest of the hill and down toward

the lake. They went to a small forest clearing in which stood an eight-foot Diana, the huntress Diana, chaste and fleet-footed, so beautifully finished she seemed not like marble at all, not like anything cold or static, "I always had the idea," said Keogh, "that nobody can lie anywhere near her."

She looked up at the Diana.

"Not even to themselves," said Keogh, and plumped down on a marble bench.

"Let's have it," she said.

"You want to make Guy Gibbon happen all over again. It's a crazy idea and it's a big one too. But lots of things were crazier, and some bigger, and now they're commonplace. I won't argue on how crazy it is, or how big."

"What then?"

"I've been trying, the last day or so, to back way out, far off, get a look at this thing with some perspective. Sylva, you've forgotten something."

"Good," she said. "Oh, good. I knew you'd think of things like this before it was too late."

"So you can find a way out?" Slowly he shook his head. "Not this time. Tighten up the Wyke guts, girl, and make up your mind to quit."

"Go ahead."

"It's just this. I don't believe you're going to get your carbon copy, mind you, but you just might. I've been talking to Weber, and by God you just about might. But if you do, all you've got is a container, and nothing to fill it with. Look, girl, a man isn't blood and bone and body cells, and that's all."

He paused, until she said, "Go on, Keogh."

He demanded, "You love this guy?"

"Keogh!" She was amused.

"Whaddaya love?" he barked. "That skrinkly hair? The muscles, skin? His natural equipment? The eyes, voice?"

"All that," she said composedly.

"All that, and that's all?" he demanded relentlessly. "Because if your answer is yes, you can have what you want, and more power to you, and good riddance. I don't know anything about love, but I will say this: that if that's all there is to it, the hell with it."

"Well of *course* there's more."

"Ah. And where are you going to get that, girl? Listen, a man is skin and bone he stands in, plus what's in his head, plus what's in his heart. You mean to reproduce Guy Gibbon, but you're not going to do it by duplicating his carcass. You want to duplicate the whole man, you're going to have to make him live the same life again. And that you can't do."

She looked up at the Diana for a long time. Then, "Why not?" she



breathed.

"I'll tell you why not," he said angrily. "Because first of all you have to find out *who he is*."

"I know who he is!"

He spat explosively on the green moss by the bench. It was totally uncharacteristic and truly shocking. "You don't know a particle, and I know even less: I had his back against a wall one time for better than two hours, trying to find out who he is. He's just another kid, is all. Nothing much in school, nothing much at sports, same general tastes and feelings as six zillion other ones like him. Why him, Sylva? Why him? What did you ever see in a guy like that to be worth the marrying?"

"I... didn't know you disliked him."

"Oh hell, girl, I don't! I never said that. I can't—I can't even find anything to dislike."

"You don't know him the way I do."

"There, I agree. I don't and I couldn't. Because you don't know anything either—you *feel*, but you don't *know*. If you want to see Guy Gibbon again, or a reasonable facsimile, he's going to have to live by a script from the day he's born. He'll have to duplicate every experience that this kid here ever had."

"All right," she said quietly.

He looked at her, stunned. He said, "And before he can do that, we have to write the script. And before we can write it, we have to get the material somehow. What do you expect to do—set up a foundation or something dedicated to the discovery of each and every moment this—this unnoticeable young man ever lived through? And do it secretly, because while he's growing up he can't ever know? Do you know how much that would cost, how many people it would involve?"

"That would be all right," she said.

"And suppose you had it, a biography written like a script, twenty years of a lifetime, every day, every hour you could account for; now you're going to have to arrange for a child, from birth, to be surrounded by people who are going to play this script out—and who will never let anything else happen to him but what's in the script, and who will never let him know."

"That's it! That's it!" she cried.

He leapt to his feet and swore at her. He said, "I'm not planning this, you lovestruck lunatic, I'm objecting to it!"

"Is there any more?" she cried eagerly. "Keogh, Keogh, try—try hard. How do we start? What do we do first? Quick, Keogh."

He looked at her, thunderstruck, and at last sank down on the bench and began to laugh weakly. She sat by him, held his hand, her eyes shining. After a time he sobered, and turned to her. He drank the shine of those eyes for a

while; and after, his brain began to function again... on Wyke business...

"The main source of who he is and what he's done," he said at last, "won't be with us much longer... We better go tell Rathburn to get him off the morphine. He has to be able to think."

"All right," she said. "All right."

When the pain got too much to permit him to remember any more, they tried a little morphine again. For a while they found a balance between recollection and agony, but the agony gained. Then they severed his spinal cord so he couldn't feel it. They brought in people—psychiatrist, stenographers, even a professional historian.

In the rebuilt barn, Weber tried animal hosts, cows even, and primates—everything he could think of. He got some results, though no good ones. He tried humans too. He couldn't cross the bridge of body tolerance; the uterus will not support an alien fetus any more than the hand will accept the graft of another's finger.

So he tried nutrient solutions. He tried a great many.

Ultimately he found one that worked. It was the blood plasma of pregnant women.

He placed the best of the quasi-ova between sheets of sterilized chamois. He designed automatic machinery to drip the plasma in at arterial tempo, drain it at a venous rate, keep it at body temperature.

One day fifty of them died, because of the chloroform used in one of the adhesives. When light seemed to affect them adversely, Weber designed containers of bakelite. When ordinary photography proved impractical, he designed a new kind of film sensitive to heat, the first infrared film.

The viable fetuses he had at sixty days showed the eye-spot, the spine, the buds of arms, a beating heart. Each and every one of them consumed, or was bathed in, over a gallon of plasma a day, and at one point there were one hundred and seventy-four thousand of them. Then they began to die off—some malformed, some chemically unbalanced, many for reasons too subtle even for Weber and his staff.

When he had done all he could, when he could only wait and see, he had fetuses seven months along and growing well. There were twenty-three of them. Guy Gibbon was dead quite a while by then, and his widow came to see Weber and tiredly put down a stack of papers and reports, urged him to read, begged him to call her as soon as he had.

He read them, he called her. He refused what she asked.

She got hold of Keogh. He refused to have anything to do with such an idea. She made him change his mind. Keogh made Weber change his mind.

The stone barn hummed with construction again, and new machinery. The cold tank was four by six feet inside, surrounded by coils and sensing devices.

They put her in it.

By that time the fetuses were eight and a half months along. There were four left.

One made it.

*Author's note:* To the reader, but especially to the reader in his early twenties, let me ask: did you ever have the feeling that you were getting pushed around? Did you ever want to do something, and have all sorts of obstacles thrown in your way until you had to give up, while on the other hand some other thing you wanted was made easy for you? Did you ever feel that certain strangers know Who you are? Did you ever meet a girl who made you explode inside, who seemed to like you—and who was mysteriously plucked out of your life, as if she shouldn't be in the script?

Well, we've all had these feelings. Yet if you've read the above, you'll allow it's a little more startling than just a story. It reads like an analogy, doesn't it? I mean, it doesn't have to be a castle, or the ol' swimmin' hole, and the names have been changed to protect the innocent... author.

Because it could be about time for her to wake up, aged only two or three years for her twenty-year cold sleep. And when she meets you, it's going to be the biggest thing that ever happened to you since the last time.

## **The End**